

ICLEI

Local
Governments
for Sustainability

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES & CITIES INITIATIVE

A city is not sustainable if it is prone to disaster. Disasters result in deaths and injuries, illness, loss of livelihoods, economic hardship, and environmental degradation. A community is well advised to take steps to prevent sudden events (such as economic shocks, epidemics, and chemical spills) from becoming disasters.

WHAT ABOUT DISASTERS THAT CAN'T BE PREVENTED? Extreme weather events, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions can result in disasters. In these cases, the most effective way to minimize the impacts of such disasters is to ensure that the affected community is as resilient as possible.

LOCAL ACTION FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES & CITIES Action at the local level is the most effective method of reducing, mitigating, and preventing disasters. Local governments can reduce the impact of disasters on their communities by increasing their resilience. Resilience is the capacity of a community to respond to change or extreme events in a creative, preventative, and proactive way, thus avoiding crisis or disaster. In some cases, resilience may mean the ability to resist change that could negatively impact on human livelihoods. At the community level this may be reflected in the ability of the community to reorganize its social system and increase its capacity for learning and adaptation (ISDR, 2002).

WHY LOCAL RESILIENCE AGENDAS? A survey of local governments, conducted by ICLEI, found that few municipalities who had completed a Local Agenda 21 Plan had addressed disaster risks within their plans. Local Agenda 21 is a participatory, multi-stakeholder, community planning process for sustainable development. As a community cannot be sustainable unless it is resilient to disasters, there is a need to provide local governments with a concrete approach to integrating disaster risk into their Local Agenda 21 planning processes.

$$\text{Sustainability} = \frac{\text{Resilience}}{\text{Risk}}$$

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES & CITIES INITIATIVE Launched by ICLEI at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the initiative aims to increase communities' resilience to crisis and change, thereby increasing their sustainability. Several programs will be developed by ICLEI, the first of which is the Resilient Communities & Cities Partnership Program.

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Partners in the Resilient Communities
Cities Partnership Program:

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 **UN-HABITAT**
United Nations Human Settlements Programme




United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

 **HUAIROU COMMISSION**
Women, Homes & Community



International Centre for Sustainable Cities

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RESILIENT COMMUNITIES & CITIES PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM This international, multi-year program aims to develop and introduce a resilience planning process for local governments to respond to natural, industrial, social, and economic disasters.

Utilizing Local Agenda 21 principles, the process will allow municipal staff, elected officials, and community stakeholders to identify and prioritize their community's vulnerabilities and build on its strengths and capacities. Through action research with cities and communities, the program will design and test methodologies and mechanisms that build local resilience.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES NETWORK Local government disaster prevention professionals are invited to join the Resilient Communities Network, coordinated by ICLEI. The Network provides a forum for local government staff and elected officials to share their experience with resilience-building and broaden their expertise.

For more information see:

WWW.ICLEI.ORG/RCC

DISASTERS — THREATS TO COMMUNITIES AND CITIES

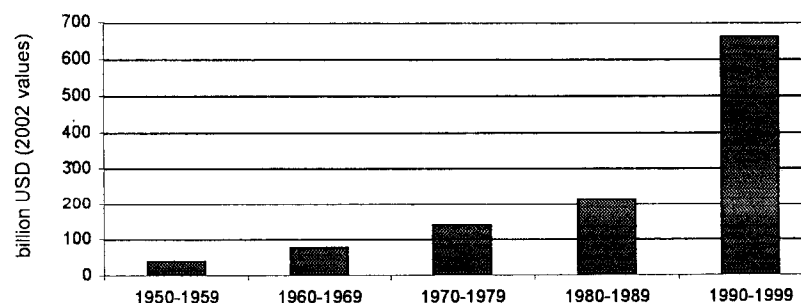
The number of recorded disasters has been steadily increasing. From 1999–2003, the number of natural and technological disasters averaged 707 per year (International Red Cross, World Disasters Report 2004). The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami focused global attention on the devastating impacts of disasters on people, livelihoods, and the environment.

DISASTERS AFFECT PEOPLE From 1999 to 2003, an average of 300 million people per year were affected by disasters, primarily natural disasters. Even if the number of deaths resulting from disasters has decreased in recent years, the number of people affected has risen significantly. Disasters can result in illness, economic hardship, and increased poverty. People in developing countries, particularly the poor, are impacted most severely by disasters.

DISASTERS ARE COSTLY Even before the Indian Ocean tsunami, 2004 was already another record year for the insurance industry with insured losses of US\$42 billion, primarily as a result of natural disaster claims (*Swiss Re, news release, Dec. 2004*). There is a trend towards higher economic losses because of an increasing number of disasters, rising population densities, and the rapid urbanization of exposed and risk-prone areas.

The costs of reconstructing homes, schools, hospitals, businesses, and infrastructure following a major disaster can be significant. As well, the social cost of lost livelihoods, interrupted education, and dislocation can be very high.

Economic Losses Due to Natural Disasters (1950–2000)



Source: UNDP, *Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development*, 2004

DISASTERS HARM THE ENVIRONMENT The natural environment can be seriously degraded as a result of disasters resulting in loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, and contamination of air, water, and soil. Such impacts can often have a serious and long-term impact on people's health and livelihoods and set back progress towards sustainable development.

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SOME DISASTERS CAN BE AVOIDED A disaster is the result of the impact of a hazard (such as a typhoon or drought) on society. The effects of a disaster are determined by a community's level of vulnerability to the hazard or its capacity to cope with it (*International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, Living with Risk, 2002*).

Disaster risk reduction involves developing and implementing policies and practices to minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risk in a community in order to avoid or limit the impacts of hazards, within the context of sustainable development (*ISDR, 2002*). Land use planning that prevents construction in flood-prone areas, zoning regulations that result in appropriate siting of industry and settlements, and public education on disaster risk and preparedness are methods of avoiding potential disasters.

MANY HAZARDS THAT CAUSE DISASTERS CAN'T BE PREVENTED Extreme weather events, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions can result in disasters. In these cases, the most effective way to minimize the impacts of such disasters is to ensure that the affected community is as resilient as possible.

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